IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of audio signal handling, comprising the steps of receiving a compression encoded audio signal and compression decoding the compression encoded audio signal to produce a decoded audio signal, characterised in that the method further comprises: deriving an auxiliary data signal relating to the compression encoded audio signal to be communicated together with the decoded audio signal and for use in re-encoding the decoded audio signal; communicating the auxiliary data signal together with the decoded audio signal; and re-encoding the decoded audio signal utilising information from the auxiliary data signal.

2. (original) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises all or part of the encoded audio signal.

3. (original) A method according to Claim 2, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises audio-related data from the encoded audio signal.

4. (original) A method according to Claim 3, wherein the auxiliary data signal comprises time information from the encoded audio signal.

5. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 4, wherein the auxiliary data signal further comprises program-associated data from the encoded audio signal.

6. (currently amended) A method of audio signal handling, comprising the steps of receiving a compression encoded audio signal which signal is compression encoded based on analysis and quantisation decisions, and compression decoding the compression encoded audio

signal to produce a decoded audio signal, characterised by the further steps of: deriving an auxiliary data signal indicative of the analysis and quantisation decisions employed for the compression encoded audio signal to be communicated together with the decoded audio signal and for use in re-encoding the decoded audio signal; communicating the auxiliary data signal together with the decoded audio signal and re-encoding the decoded audio signal utilising information from the auxiliary data signal to produce a re-encoded audio signal employing the same analysis and quantisation as the encoded audio signal.

7. (original) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the analysis comprises application of a sub-band filter bank.

8. (original) A method according to Claim 7, wherein the auxiliary data signal is indicative of the frequency analysis into sub-bands and the method of quantisation within each sub-band employed for the encoded audio signal frequency.

9. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the encoded audio signal is an MPEG audio coded signal.

10. (original) A method according to Claim 9, wherein the auxiliary data signal contains information relating to one or more of: the position of audio frame boundaries in the encoded audio signal; frequency sub-bands; scale factors for the sub-bands within each audio frame of the encoded audio signal; bit allocation data for each audio frame of the encoded audio signal.

11. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal is combined with the decoded audio signal for communication along a common signal path with the decoded audio signal.

12. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is formatted to enable an integrity check prior to use of the auxiliary data signal in a re-encoding process, to ensure transparent communication of the auxiliary data signal along a decoded audio signal path.

13. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in the least significant bits of a digital decoded audio signal.

14. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried as user data bits in a recognized digital interface format.

15. (original) A method according to Claim 11, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in the upper part of the audio spectrum.

16. (original) A method according to Claim 15, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in higher frequencies associated with sub-bands unused in the compression encoding.

17. (original) A method according to Claim 16, in which MPEG audio coding is employed, wherein a filter arrangement analogous to the MPEG analysis sub-band filter arrangement and its reciprocal, is employed for insertion of the auxiliary data signal into the decoded audio signal.

18. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data signal is carried in a separate path to the decoded audio signal.

19. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 18, wherein the auxiliary data signal path is disabled for independent re-encoding, in the event of processing of the decoded audio signal not being substantially transparent, thereby inhibiting use of information from the auxiliary data signal in re-encoding.

20. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 19, wherein a subsidiary auxiliary data signal is added to the decoded audio signal, indicative of such processing.